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ABSTRACT

High quality day care is a pressing social need for the 1970's. Factors responsible for the strong interest in day care include pressures for welfare reform, the growing number of women in the labor force, minority pressures for equal opportunities, and research findings stressing the importance of development during the early years of a child's life. Day care has taken many forms ranging from baby sitting to full-day group care and 24-hour care. Along with variations in the type of day care offered are variations in the services offered by day care centers, including operating hours, provisions for health care, special lessons or tutoring, and transportation services. All-day programs must be planned wisely to help children develop and to meet their needs. Guidelines for providing individualized care along with a discussion of the costs of day care and issues relating to licensing, community coordination, and education of day care personnel are included in this publication. (SB)

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Day care for America's children

By E. Robert LaCrosse

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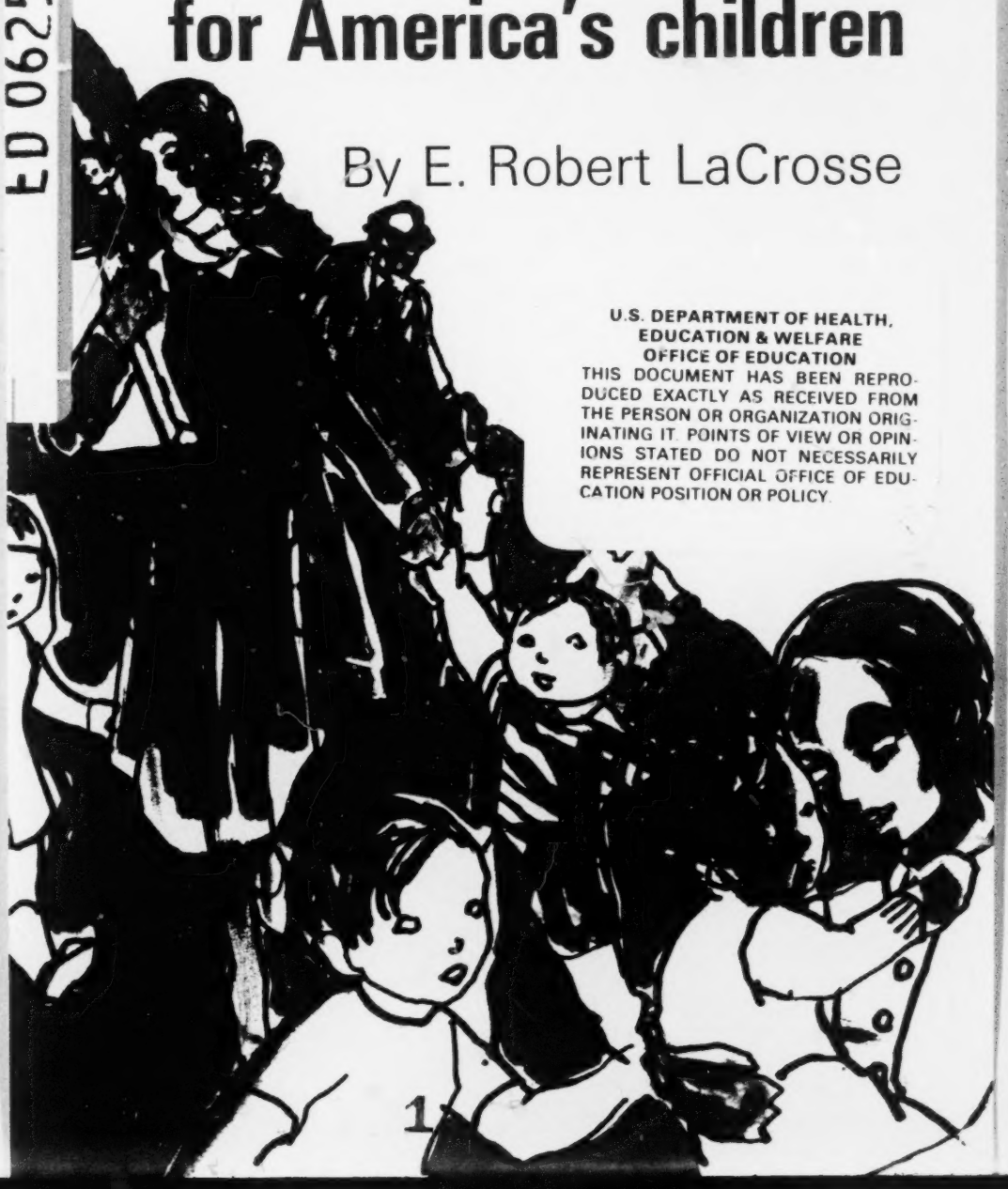

High-quality day care is a pressing social need for the 1970s. As Dr. LaCrosse points out, mothers who work are concerned about many aspects of care for their young children. This concern is held by a broad spectrum of American families, whether of low or high income, and regardless of ethnic or cultural group. For all children, day care programs "developed wisely and sensitively" can enhance healthy and fulfilling growth.

The Day Care and Child Development Council of America, which is working for universally available day care, is pleased to have cooperated in the publication of this pamphlet.

JOHN H. NIEMEYER, *President*
Day Care and Child Development Council of America, Inc.

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Day care for America's children

By E. Robert LaCrosse

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DAY CARE in America very likely began when one Indian mother handed her child to another and said, "Here, take care of him while I walk down to the stream to get water." Today, there are still some kinds of day care in the United States which are not much more complicated than that. In essence, day care is any situation where a child is cared for by someone other than his parent or guardian. But it takes many forms. The term "day care" is misleading if taken literally, for it may include night care or, in some special instances, all-week care.

Historically, day care facilities were set up to take care of children from poor families, or from families that could not adequately care for their children. One stigma day care has had to combat is the notion that it is just for poor children or children from "incompetent" families. In fact, day care should, and frequently does, serve children of all colors, from all walks of life, and from all kinds of families, for a variety of reasons.

Jane Hinshaw's husband died recently, leaving her with a three-year-old daughter, a seven-year-old son, and no income. She needs to go to work. She also needs someone to take care of her daughter from 6:30 in the morning until 5:45 and someone to watch her son after school. She would like her children to be together.

Sally Jones has a three-month-old son. She needs care for her infant son from 6:00 A.M. *until 3:00* P.M., *six days a week, so that she can work to help pay some heavy medical debts.*

Ruby First is very active in coordinating the Parent Involvement Program for black parents in the local Head Start. She spends much time at meetings, and needs someone to take care of her three children, all under the age of seven, at odd hours. The demands on her time come quickly and unexpectedly, and her husband often has to work overtime. She needs day care that is very flexible.

Sam and Marsha Phillips' four-year-old daughter Cindy is deaf. Cindy's medical bills are high, so both parents must work and they need care for Cindy. They want some place close to her hearing clinic, but they don't want a setting that caters only to deaf children. They want a place that is sympathetic to children with handicaps but doesn't make a "big thing" out of it; one that will meet Cindy's special needs, yet help her adjust to a hearing world.

Phyllis Morgan knows that she is a better mother if she can get away from her children on a regular basis to do some of the things she finds gratifying. She attends art classes and does occasional secretarial work in her husband's law office. She needs care for her preschool twins three afternoons a week.

John Roberts is divorced and has custody of his children. He needs someone to take care of them during the day and to be on call during the evenings if he should have to see a client after supper.

The Knowells live in a neighborhood where there are few children. Their four-year-old daughter needs experience in getting along with other children before she goes into kindergarten.

Ramona Vasquez, separated from her husband, has just learned of an opportunity to train for a job as a beauty technician. This will give her a chance to become self-supporting. She needs care for her children from 9:00 A.M. *until 2:00* P.M. *each day. Mrs.*

Vasquez is very concerned, however, that her children be cared for by someone who knows the Mexican-American life-style and who will provide for her children a climate that will enhance their ethnic identity.

Although day care has been with us for many, many years, it is only recently that it has become an issue of popular interest. Why has day care suddenly increased in visibility across the nation? Why are many persons now saying that day care should be universally available? Several developments seem to have led to our present concern.

working mothers

In the past twenty years, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of women in the labor force. In 1970 the U. S. Office of Child Development reported that about 60 per cent of the children in the United States have mothers who work and who are, therefore, probably away from home a significant part of the day. This means that many of these children need some form of day care. In the same report, the Office of Child Development indicated that the highest percentage of children getting licensed day care service in any one state was a mere 5.8 per cent. Or, to put it another way, in 1969 it was estimated that there were a total of 638,000 licensed day care spaces in the entire United States. This is indeed a small figure — given the Census Bureau's estimate of over 59 million children under 14 who could use day care. No wonder, then, that working mothers are seriously concerned about day care for their children.

welfare reform

A second factor contributing to the concern and interest in day care is the pressure for welfare reform. For many people on welfare, receiving aid has become a vicious circle which, instead of helping them become independent, makes families feel more and more depersonalized and more and more dependent on welfare. In recent years, people who live at the poverty level have become increasingly articulate about changes they feel should be made. Taxpayers, nervously eyeing the rising costs of welfare, have

also begun to clamor for changes. A welfare system that offers a person no way out becomes increasingly burdensome and costly. At this writing, Congress is considering several pieces of legislation on welfare reform — all of them, as proposed, including some form of child care.

There are many single-parent families on welfare. If these parents are to be trained for new jobs and then be able to hold these jobs, they need child care services. No mother or father really wants to go off in the morning and leave children on their own until five o'clock. If, however, there were some kind of care for children while their parents are in job-training programs, as well as later, when the parents are working, there might well be a greater movement off welfare rolls and onto payrolls. (This assumes, of course, that the total economic situation improves and more jobs open up.) Human dignity insists on adequate care for one's children.

equal opportunity

A third factor is the growing pressure for equal opportunity. Minority groups in the United States have been demanding care for their children to enable the parents to work. The women's liberation movement has also been demanding adequate care for the children of women who wish to work. Women's lib argues rightly that a woman does not have a real choice between staying home and going to work unless she has access to high-quality day care for her children. In other words, the most tantalizing job offered to a woman is meaningless if there is no place for her children to be well looked after. Also, in many families, necessity as well as choice requires that to live at a comfortable level both parents must work. Again, this underscores the need for day care.

the temper of the times

A fourth pressure is more difficult to define, yet it is just as real as the other three. The Germans have a word for it, *zeitgeist*, which means the tone or spirit of the times. In the final third of the twentieth century, we are beginning to question the mindless proliferation of technology. We are beginning to insist that technological decisions be made in terms of human values.

Not only are we becoming more concerned about our environment, but it would appear that we Americans are becoming more concerned about the quality of our lives and the lives of people around us. Some claim we are in the middle of a social revolution. In any case, it is obvious that concern for one's fellow man is adding new items to our agenda. And the new desire to let people "do their own thing" has also added to the pressure for day care.

new interest in child development

Finally, a fifth pressure affects acceptance of day care. Research on the intellectual and emotional development of the young child has expanded considerably the past 20 years. One of the great breakthroughs has been a growing interest in the early years of life. Only recently, strange to say, have we concerned ourselves with how the small child learns. Infancy, for instance, is still a very new area of research in child development.

Out of the studies of the young child has come convincing evidence that a great deal happens before the age of six. One researcher has gone so far as to say that over half of a child's intelligence is developed by the age of four. While some argue that this is an exaggeration, most would agree that America has very little in the way of education to offer either the parent of a preschool child or the child himself. This means that we need more educational settings where young children can realize their maximum potential. There is reawakened interest in the nursery school, for instance.

Many now see day care as a means of helping children lay a good foundation for later school work and for later social relationships. In a nutshell, research indicates that children are capable of a great deal more than we ever dreamed and that it is now up to us to create environments in which children can be challenged, yet feel wanted and secure.

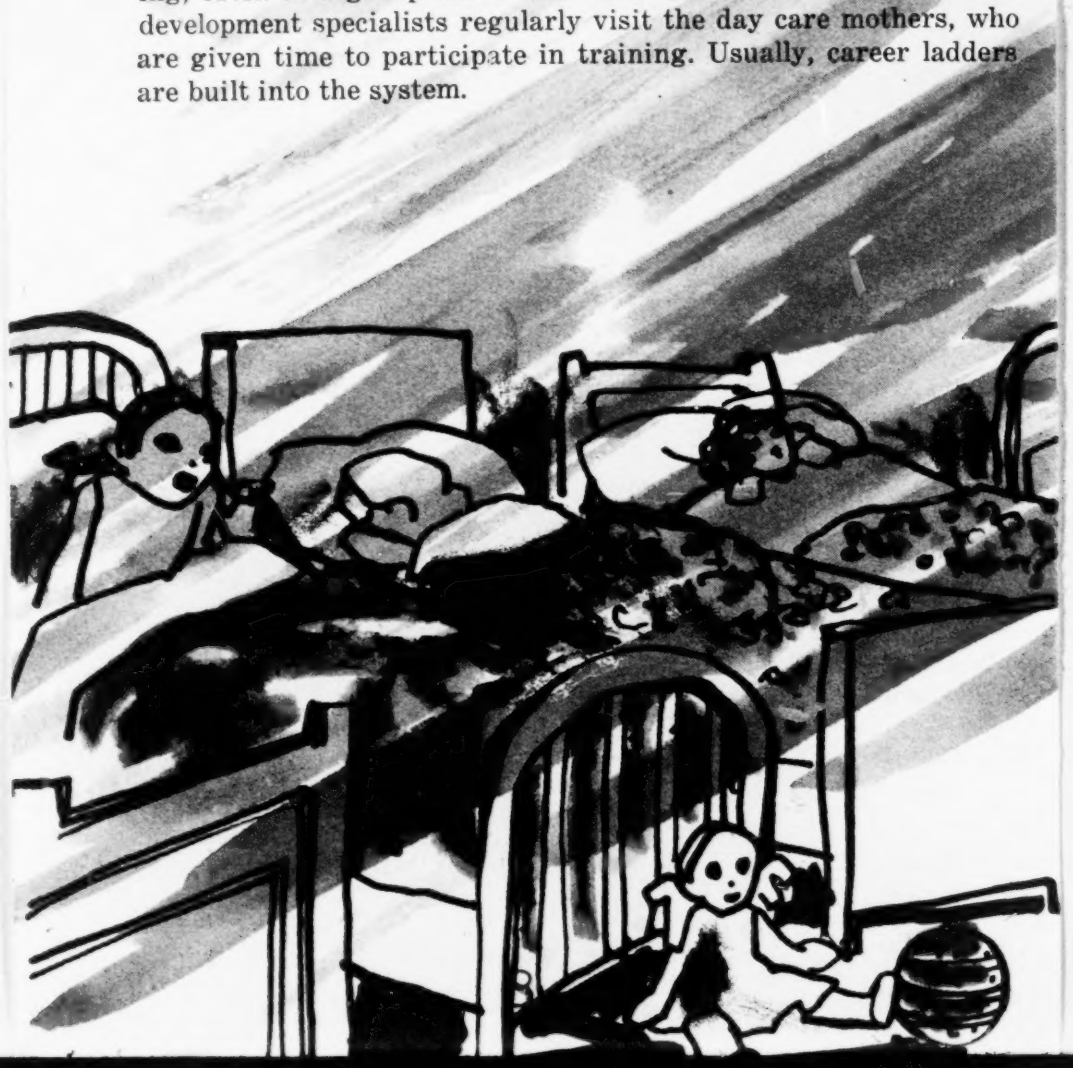
the varieties of day care

The pressures for welfare reform, the growing number of women in the labor force, minority pressures for equal opportunity, and new research findings — all have created a strong interest in day care for children. What forms does such care take?

Baby-sitting for children in their own home can be provided by a relative or a housekeeper living in the home; a relative or friend coming in to help out; or a sitter paid on an hourly basis.

Family day care is provided in the home of a relative, a neighbor, a friend, or a person who is paid for care. The latter may run a licensed day care home, or be unlicensed. (Some of the questions related to licensing are discussed on page 21.)

In *family day care systems,* family day care homes are found, supervised, and assisted by a centrally administered coordinating agency. The mothers who provide family day care are given training, often in a group center that is linked into the system. Child development specialists regularly visit the day care mothers, who are given time to participate in training. Usually, career ladders are built into the system.



Nursery schools, which are part-day programs under varying auspices, may be free or may charge tuition, and can operate for five or fewer days a week. Most nursery schools emphasize the child's development of skills, and the teachers see themselves as very much a part of the mainstream of education.

Full-day group care can be operated under public, proprietary (for profit), or nonprofit sponsorship. Tuition is usually charged. Group centers offer flexible hours, combining full-day care and part-day care for different children. Sometimes small groups of infants are cared for in a special section of a center. In most states the ratio of caretaker to child is prescribed by law.

Twenty-four-hour care is often available as part of a communal life-style, as it is at Synanon and in some religious groups. In such a situation the parent continues to have main responsibility

for his child's life, but the residential care is an extension of parental care and part of the life-style of that family. (This differs from "institutionalization," which is not considered day care because the parent surrenders control of the child's rearing.)

And there are various combinations. For instance, some parents might place their children in a nursery school five mornings a week and then have them go to a day care center until 4:30 in the afternoon. Although not all child care specialists agree on it, some feel strongly that such a combination of environments for children over three years of age can be more beneficial than a single, routine setting every day. The limits of the combinations depend on the ingenuity of the parent, the child's needs, and the resources in the community.

the components of day care

It is obvious that day care comes in a variety of sizes, with a variety of philosophies and, like everything else in this world, with a variety in degrees of excellence. Moreover, there is a wide variety among the specific services it may provide. As an illustration, here are some of the components of a day care center.

The schedule. Most day care centers have a 10- to 12-hour day. Some offer care before and after school hours for children of school age, and some also offer vacation care for elementary school children.

However, virtually no day care center offers the *evening and night care* needed by mothers who work the swing shift or on weekends. Possible exceptions are hospitals that operate day care centers. Also, by mid-1971, two church-sponsored day care centers in New York City were able to operate on a 24-hour basis with the help of funds from the City's Department of Social Services. The schedule enables mothers who work late or night shifts to be assured of responsible care for their children. In one of these centers, for example, night care provides supper, evening activities, a place to sleep, a registered nurse until 10 P.M., breakfast in the morning.

Evening care becomes particularly critical when one thinks of day care as an adjunct to job training. Often the only job an underskilled adult can get will require working late in the evening

or in the early hours of the morning. In a single-parent family, then, evening care for the child may be the key to whether or not the parent can work.

Health services can range from the weekly appearance of a school nurse to look the children over, to preventive health services such as vaccinations, shots, and periodic medical examinations. Day care centers do not ordinarily take care of sick children, although some proprietary centers are willing to administer medicine that has been prescribed by a child's doctor, and directors may occasionally take a child to the doctor if it is impossible for the parents to do so. Some persons experienced in day care feel that providing medical care, enrolling children in school, and going to school conferences are usurpations of the parents' role. But when such help is needed, it must be negotiated between the parents and the center.

Provision for the care of sick children has been a perennial problem in day care. Very few day care centers have grappled with the problem of care for children with contagious diseases or high fevers. Some, however, will have a sick bay for mildly ill children. An increasing number of centers are able to obtain psychiatric consultation, and some clinics will offer consultation to centers that have children with difficult behavior problems.

Some day care centers offer *transportation to and from school.* However, transportation for field trips and other excursions outside a center is not very often provided in day care, partly because of the high cost of the transportation itself and partly because of the ensuing high insurance rates.

Educators are still examining what a full day's *curriculum* should include. Past experience has been largely limited to the half-day program of a nursery school; a full day offers an entirely new educational challenge.

Some centers offer *special lessons or tutoring* in swimming, French, music, other subjects. While university-affiliated day care programs usually offer experimental learning curriculums, these are few and far between. Some other day care centers stress formal learning. But most day care for children under six is primarily concerned with the child's social growth, and does not provide much in the way of a formal curriculum or special lessons.

Almost all day care centers provide one *hot meal* a day. Some also serve breakfast or dinner, depending on the needs of the child's family and the facilities of the center. Many centers wisely use their kitchens as part of the educational component of their curriculum — for instance, in helping to bake a cake, a child learns about weights and measures, chemical reactions, agriculture, and differences in people's taste preferences.

The Child Welfare League of America, an important organization in the development of day care, has always listed *social work service* as a prime requisite of a quality day care program. Yet, very few programs offer such service, although some day nurseries use a social worker for initial interviews and for referring families to other community services they may need. Social work

aides, drawn from the communities the day care center serves, can be particularly effective in helping parents make the best use of the service and of other community resources.

the parents' decision

It might be interesting to consider how the average parent uses day care. In a recent study at the Harvard University School of Education, over 500 parents of varied social, economic, and ethnic backgrounds were interviewed. Of the children involved, over half of those under the age of six were cared for regularly either outside the home or by someone else. Three-quarters of the children under six who were cared for by somebody else were cared for in a home setting, while less than 10 per cent were cared for in a group day care center. This study also found that the day care was paid for largely through barter; that is, a parent and a day care operator negotiated payment — money or exchange of service. It is also interesting that only 20 per cent of the children in day care were actually there more than 20 hours a week.

What does all this mean? First, if we can generalize from the state of Massachusetts, a great many children are cared for during the week by people other than their parents. Further, most of them would appear to be cared for in "informal" situations; certainly at present, in the United States, the most prevalent form of day care is family day care. But more and more day care centers are being established, and the proportion of children cared for in a group setting is probably increasing.

The authors of the Harvard study found that the parents' decision about where to send their child was influenced by cost, by how close the setting was to home, whether the hours meshed easily with the parents' schedule, and, finally, the quality of the service. It seems clear that parents probably use day care for their own convenience and needs. It is therefore important that parents be informed about criteria by which to evaluate the quality of day care and be encouraged to question programs or practices. In the Harvard study, cost, proximity, and flexibility of hours were much stronger factors in the parents' decision than was the quality of the center.

helping the child develop

Some people argue that all-day group care flies in the face of our cherished belief in "rugged individualism" — by which we usually mean self-reliance, the ability to make decisions on one's own, and at least on occasion to take an individual, perhaps unpopular, stand. If children are "handled" as a group, there is the danger that they will become just another cog, or just another face in the crowd, always bowing to group pressure and never able to test the loneliness of their own ideas.

But skilled group care can anticipate and avoid this problem if its program is developed wisely and sensitively. And this is important especially because children may be in a day care program 8 hours a day, 5 days a week — unlike nursery school, where a child may attend only 3 hours a day, and perhaps only 3 days a week.

What, then, should go into individualized care in an extended-day program?*

- Day care workers must be able to cope with the strong emotions of young children. A wildly happy or hysterically upset child may be hard to handle, but expressing strong emotions is a part of childhood and a part of growing up.
- At times children have a need to cling, to be cuddled, to be dependent. Even though it can interfere with attention to other children in the group, the child who is seeking such signs of closeness should not be denied his need.
- Children must be kept track of as individuals. This takes a sharp eye, particularly if a child tends to be quiet, obedient, and self-absorbed. A program can be individualized only as well as one knows the individual child.
- The day care center must provide the opportunity for the child to see adults "doing their thing." A surprising number of people come to a home in a week: the mailman, a delivery man, perhaps a plumber, a door-to-door salesman, the cleaner, and others. Children should be allowed to experience as many similar contacts as possible in the center.

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*For a fuller description, see Prescott, et al., *Group Day Care as a Child Rearing Environment.*

• Children should also have the opportunity to make decisions on their own. Too close supervision can be stifling for anyone. In our concern for the safety of children, we sometimes wind up raising them in the middle of a marshmallow. To test their own capacities and to learn to cope with the consequences of making a mistake or breaking a rule, children must be given the opportunity to make up their own minds.

These guidelines, along with a program that permits children to make choices — "Shall I color, go play with blocks, get somebody to read to me, or take a quick nap?" — will allow a child the range of options that helps him grow.

the costs of providing day care

Questions about costs can be answered only in broad terms. The costs of providing day care, and what parents must pay for it, vary from one section of the country to another, from one city

to another, and, within any city, from one neighborhood to another. It is difficult to generalize. It is perhaps easier to examine the factors that contribute to the costs of running a center.

The greatest expense in any day care operation, as in all human services, is *staff salaries* — although nobody in the day care field, regardless of qualifications, earns very much money for the rigorous, full-day, year-round job he does. A highly educated staff, of course, costs more money than a staff with no training.

Overhead expenses — for rent or land and buildings, equipment, maintenance — must be considered in any cost estimate. They vary widely, depending on the region of the country and whether facilities are urban, suburban, or rural. Costs depend on whether the day care facility was built from scratch or whether it was remodeled. They also are affected by local health, fire, and insurance regulations. Another operating expense that must be considered is the cost of food and snacks.

With the proliferation of day care to meet the increased demand, *state licensing costs* will skyrocket and should really be included in determining day care costs. Many states have not increased the budgets of their day care licensing departments for many years, yet the case loads for these departments have quadrupled in some instances.

Costs vary with the *age of the child* served. The younger and more helpless the child, the higher the cost. Most day care centers group children by age; that is, they put all the two-year-olds together in one room, and all the three-year-olds in a different room. Some persons argue that it is cheaper to provide day care in a "family unit" structure, where infants to six-year-olds are mixed. The older children spontaneously care for the younger — or at least can comfort them in times of minor stress — thus allowing greater flexibility for staff members. In the family unit structure the younger child also benefits by having a learning model much closer to himself in age and ability than is an adult, while the older child is helped to develop a sense of achievement and responsibility.

State and local regulations also affect the cost of child care. In most states the *adult-child ratio* required for three-, four-, and five-year-olds is 10 to 1. Some states permit a ratio of 18 to

1 for two-year-old children, while another state requires a ratio of 2 to 1 for the same age. There is very little uniformity between states. It is obvious that 1 adult to every 18 children is much less expensive than 1 adult to every 2 children.

Also affecting the cost are state *requirements for staff education* in day care. Most states require some minimum of child development training, but there are vast differences among requirements across the nation.

Indoor and outdoor *space requirements* also can be a contributing cost factor. Laws require specific footage; most states require 35 square feet of interior space per child. Unfortunately, most laws say nothing about the quality of the space. An outdoor area of 2,750 square feet — enough in most states to serve 50 children — can be a deadly sight if it is covered with asphalt.

Of all problems relating to costs, *zoning requirements* are among the most difficult — as shown in an analysis by Elizabeth Pres-

cott, a long-time researcher on day care. In many communities day care is considered a commercial enterprise; it cannot be located in residential neighborhoods without a public hearing and a variance in regulations. On the other hand, there are regulations that do not allow for the care of children in commercial zones; so in reality it is extremely difficult to establish day care anywhere. Children are being zoned out of our cities to the detriment of both the children and the cities.

Limiting day care to commercial neighborhoods also limits its variety and accessibility. For instance, the diversity found in physical sites of nursery schools in metropolitan Los Angeles reflects the traditions that preceded tightening of regulations and rapid changes in land use patterns and values. The majority of the existing nurseries probably could not be established today in their present locations.

The greater the amount of capital required to purchase land, the fewer the types of day care that can be provided. Proprietary day care programs are particularly vulnerable to the cost of land. In some areas real estate is so expensive that they probably cannot be established at all.

Day care programs are more often started in already existing buildings rather than in newly built facilities especially designed for them. The age of the building, its suitability for group care of young children, and the cost of maintenance and improvement all serve as constraints. Older buildings are more likely to be spacious and relatively cheap, but they pose maintenance problems. If they are two-story, fire department regulations may limit their use for children to the first floor, which is wasteful unless the upstairs can be rented or used for another purpose. In neighborhoods where day care programs cannot be developed because of high land values or restrictive zoning, they must move into already existing facilities such as churches, schools, and community centers. But sharing facilities places severe limits on the effective development and use of the space.

All these factors play an important role in determining the cost of day care. As a consequence, they also play a very important role in determining the availability of day care. Day care must remain within the reach of the majority of the population.

Considering that there are about two children in the American family, and that in a group day care center $25 per week per child is a common rate, it could cost an average family — or a working mother — over $200 a month to have two children under the age of six cared for. Luckily for parents, many centers will negotiate fees for several children from the same family. But however it is sliced, day care is an expensive proposition.

meeting the needs of children

The Child Development/Day Care Workshop was established by the Office of Child Development in the U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. The Workshop was a response to the great surge in day care. Its goal was to develop some guidelines for day care which could be useful throughout the country.

In 1970, the committees of the Workshop published a "Statement of Principles for Day Care," in which they identified basic needs of children. The committees began with the assumption that the primary objective of day care was "to meet the needs of children for experiences which will foster their development as human beings." They considered several elements of prime concern in the growth and development of children:

- Any program must be concerned with the *health and nutrition* of its charges and, therefore, should take pains to see that each child is kept healthy and provided with an adequate diet.
- Young children are dependent upon adults for their well-being and, therefore, any child care environment must meet the child's *need for security.* It would do this by supporting the parents in their responsibility and by developing a climate of stability and mutual trust.
- Children in the early years of their lives have a great deal to learn, want to learn a great deal, and, typically, have an enormous and insatiable curiosity. Therefore, they have a *need for freedom* to explore their environment, make their own mistakes, and learn from them. Children, as well as adults, must be afforded the right to develop in a manner appropriate to them.
- Each child has a *need for structure.* A regularity and rhythm to his environment provides a background of security

from which he can sally forth to explore the world. Children need reasonable limits and a certain predictability in their world in order to be able to interpret events and feel they have some control over them.

- Children have a *need for someone who understands.* They must be surrounded by adults who are sensitive to a child's size, his particular family circumstances, his physical or mental limitations, his particular emotional state.
- Each program must also recognize *developmental differences.* Two children of exactly the same age may have a very different set of developmental capabilities. They cannot, therefore, be treated as "two-year-olds" but must be treated as individuals with unique sets of capacities and unique personalities who both happen to be two years old.
- In any educational setting a child learns best when there is a delicate mismatch between his capacity and the challenge of his environment. A child has a *need for challenge,* and in a good educational setting the environment is always one step ahead of the child. Not so far ahead as to be incomprehensible or frightening, nor so close as to be dull and boring, but at a level between the two — the delicate mismatch.

An environment that can meet these needs is the one most likely to enhance growth and help maximize potential.

Beyond this, of course, parents must be helped to express what they want for their own children. So much of our life-style is "unconscious." Rarely do we pause to think how our behavior in everyday life (food preferences, bedtime ritual, selection of friends) says to our children, "This is the way I think you should be." It takes a sensitive, dedicated day care staff to explore families' values with them so that day care can be an extension of the home, rather than a substitute for it.

the directions of day care

Day care has been developing as an issue since the mid-1960s. It is certainly one of the social issues of the seventies. As we enter the new decade, we find ourselves knowing that we want day care, but not sure where to go for it or how to get it, and, once gotten, how we should evaluate it.

In a speech establishing the Office of Child Development in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, President Nixon called for a "national commitment to provide all American children an opportunity for healthful and stimulating development during the first five years of life. . . . We have learned, first of all, that the process of learning how to learn begins very, very early in the life of the infant child. Children begin this process in the very earliest months of life, long before they are anywhere near a first grade class, or even kindergarten or play school groups." The President was saying what the nation was beginning to feel — that children need our attention and our resources long before they reach school, long before we have to mount remedial programs to return them to the mainstream of society after they have "gone wrong."

The 1970 White House Conference on Children spent a great deal of time discussing day care. The Day Care Forum of that meeting stated that day care was a universal right and should be available to all children, regardless of race or social class.

Even though they may differ on other issues, most of the groups that make up the women's liberation movement are agreed on universally available day care as one of their platform planks.

Industries and unions are beginning to set up group day care facilities so that workers can leave their children near work and even have meals with them. One of the more publicized efforts in this direction is that of KLH Industries, a manufacturer of high-fidelity equipment. With the help of the U. S. Children's Bureau, KLH established an excellent day care center to serve its employees and other families. Other industries are beginning to do the same, but the program remains somewhat controversial.

The Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America is one union that has set up day care centers for the children of its members in several locations, including Chicago and Baltimore. The centers are staffed with specialists in teaching, health care, and nutrition. Through union-management cooperation, services are provided at low cost to parents — in Baltimore, for instance, a mother pays only $5 per week for each child.

While ACWA is enthusiastic about its program, and is expanding it, no hard data are yet available on the effects of day care

on industrial operations — on absenteeism, turnover, the number of job applications, productivity, or community relations. Most industries that provide day care feel that the effects are positive, but they have yet to measure them. Only a few industries have had long-established day care centers associated with them. The main problem for them, as for all other day care facilities, is the high cost of quality.

Private franchisers have entered into the day care field with some rapidity. Unfortunately, some have had to exit just as fast. The field is in a great state of flux at the moment, as private business experiments with ways in which someone can set up a day care center, serve children, and get a moderate income out of it. Day care is expensive, particularly group day care, and income from serving children is based on many highly unstable factors. These have yet to be identified and controlled. Some franchisers do appear to be catching hold but, again, they are still quite new, the majority under three years old.

Colleges and universities are also beginning to set up group day care centers to serve the children of students and faculty. These are very new undertakings and their exact nature, func-

tion, and relationship to the university are as yet undefined. It is interesting to note that most of these day care facilities are group facilities. No school has apparently seen fit to rely on the community and perhaps employ a consortium of family day care homes to serve the same purpose, with children placed in smaller, more intimate, yet more heterogeneous groups.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

Day care is in its growing phase; as a result, constructive contributions from individuals or groups are needed, particularly to help make public officials more aware of the needs of their constituencies. *In day care we have the most potent socializing force in America since compulsory schooling.*

licensing

Day care needs a reorganization of its licensing procedures. In most states a day care center is responsible to several agencies for the conduct of its business. Typically it must answer to a Department of Social Services to make sure it provides the minimum licensing requirements for children — adequate staffing, food service, curriculum guidelines. It is responsible to the Fire Department for fire codes. It must occasionally answer to several other city departments for various city regulations, including zoning. And a day care director can find himself in rather ridiculous situations, like this one recently reported:

> In an inspection tour of a day care facility, an agent from the Department of Social Services told the day care director that a latch on a backyard gate had to be raised out of the reach of children to prevent them from wandering out into the street and getting hurt. The day care director had this taken care of immediately. One week later an inspector from the Fire Department ordered her to lower the latch to a level where children could reach it so that in case of fire they could open the gate and run away from the house! The conflicting orders were not easily resolved.

Obviously both the Social Service and the Fire Department inspectors have valid reasons for their regulations. It is just as

obvious, however, that they need to sit down together to develop a code that will serve both children and safety. In most towns, unfortunately, regulatory agencies have not done this. In such a situation a day care director's understandable tendency is to do what he or she thinks best, but he may then unwittingly be breaking a law, for which he may later be held accountable.

Further, most state licensing agencies are operating on budgets set before the day care boom. They are, therefore, understaffed and overworked, and cannot possibly supervise all the facilities they license. As a result, in some states many high-quality day care facilities merely avoid licensing, feeling it is more trouble than it is worth. (Unfortunately, sometimes licensing only confers permission to advertise in public newspapers and some degree of "respectability.") Citizen study and support of more effective licensing should result in better day care facilities and greater ease in establishing them — hence a greater variety of excellence for the consumer.

community coordination

Sad to say, most communities do not know what day care facilities are already available; nor do they have a coordinating mechanism for all the groups interested in day care. As should be obvious from this pamphlet, there are many day care facilities that the general public doesn't know about. Family day care homes, which conduct their business locally, largely by word of mouth and personal arrangements, are often "invisible." In one large California community it was found that there were 136 licensed family day care homes, and it was estimated there were twice that many in operation that were not licensed. If each of these homes took care of five children, that would serve a population of 2,040 children. Despite their invisibility, family day care homes do represent a sizable service that is functioning for children in that community. *Often communities do not need new day care facilities at all. But they do need to identify and make visible those facilities that already exist and offer help in improving them if necessary.*

Which brings us to another point. With the rising interest in day care, many groups have become involved in establishing

centers in their communities, usually to serve the people they represent. On occasion they may be somewhat possessive about their plans and reluctant to share them with others. This problem has been exacerbated by the many bits and pieces of federal legislation that serve certain categories of children. The agencies created by all these laws frequently know little about each other and rarely speak to private services. Overlapping roles have created unhelpful competition rather than cooperation.

More often it is a question of not knowing who else in the community is interested. Civic organizations like the League of Women Voters, Rotary Club, YMCA, and many social agencies can often play useful roles in bringing together the various groups in the community interested in day care. Such coordination, with full involvement of parents, will probably be most effective in the development of high-quality day care. A community working in unison can accomplish things at home as well as at the state and, ultimately, the national levels.

day care professional education

There is a startling lack of trained people in any field related to the service of children. Day care carries the further burdens of having been for so long provided informally by untrained persons, and of having only recently come to the nation's attention. As a result, there are very few training programs for day care operators or teachers.

Many of the professional day care personnel have come from the field of nursery education. A 3-hour nursery school program, however, is a far cry from a 7- to 12-hour day care program. If nothing else, there is the problem of not being able to escape from children for a longer stretch of time. Further, a much greater responsibility is placed on the day care operator for the future of her charges, since she has them all day — and they may be very, very young. It is only through consumer and day care teacher demand that colleges, junior colleges, and professional schools will set up training programs. Also, day care personnel should have the opportunity to go back to school for a refresher course or two to catch up on the fast-breaking events in day care around the country.

In addition, social, civic, and business organizations must lend their support: in acting as clearinghouses for day care information, volunteers, and recruitment of personnel; in providing transportation; in offering varied experiences for children. A dairy could offer tours of its facilities. A library could set up a special children's book section or organize story hours. The entire community can help in giving our children the best possible day care in this rich country of ours.

There is much to be done in the new-old field of day care.

for further information

Day Care and Child Development Council of America, Inc., 1426 H Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005. The Council has a day care newsletter on current developments, as well as other publications, and provides technical assistance to local programs.

The Child Welfare League of America, Inc., 67 Irving Place, New York, N.Y. 10003. The League has many publications in the field of day care, including standards for day care services.

The Child Development/Day Care Handbook Series (Infancy, Pre-School, School Age, Training, Principles). Ronald K. Parker, Project Director. Available through the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Child Development, Washington, D.C. 20201. Each of these handbooks distills the opinions of experts in the field of day care. Probably the most up-to-date series now available.

Toward an Evaluation Strategy for FAP (Family Assistance Plan) Day Care. Available from the Office of Child Development, U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Washington, D.C. 20201. This document attempts to show how day care should be evaluated, and lists questions that should be asked of any day care program.

Group Day Care as a Child-Rearing Environment, by Elizabeth Prescott and Elizabeth Jones, with Sybil Kritchevsky. Pacific Oaks College, Pasadena, 1967. (To be published by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1834 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.) An exhaustive study of the impact of group care on the behavior of teachers and children in that setting.

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